

SHEPHERD AH NEI OFF HIGHWAY VEHICLE (OHV) RECREATION AREA

PURPOSE OF THE BRIEFING DOCUMENT:

The BLM initiated travel management planning for the Shepherd Ah Nei OHV Area during the summer of 2004 with an inventory of all roads and trails. The environmental assessment and decision record for managing off-highway vehicle travel within the OHV area was released May 13, 2005.

ISSUES:

The BLM's Shepherd Ah Nei Recreation Area near Billings is a very popular destination for a variety of recreationists, including OHV riders. The OHV portion of Shepherd Ah Nei was closed in April 2004 pending completion of a travel management plan and environmental assessment analyzing the effects of OHV use on the 1,063-acre area.

The travel management plan and decision to reopen was released in May 2005. In June, the decision was appealed with a stay. The Interior Board of Land Appeals granted a stay on the decision in July 2005. The stay was lifted in September 2005 allowing the area to reopen but the plan was still under appeal. On June 8, 2007, the Interior Board of Land Appeals ruled in favor of the BLM-Billings Field Office and affirmed the May 2005 decision.

A lawsuit was filed on October 16, 2006, in the U.S. District Court of Montana challenging the travel management plan and decision that was released in May 2005. The suit claimed violation of the National Environmental Policy Act and Federal Lands Policy Act and the administrative procedure. The plaintiff sought declaratory and injunctive relief. On June 28, 2007, the case was dismissed.

MAIN DECISION OR MESSAGE:

The Billings Field Office continues to implement the travel management plan that was released in May 2005.

The area was closed on July 25, 2007, because of extremely dry conditions and the potential for wildfire. The riding area was reopened in September and has remained open all winter. The area could be closed this spring due to wet or muddy conditions.

All users will be required to purchase a use permit before March 15, 2008. A yearly pass is available for \$35, or a day use pass for \$5. Two types of permits are available as well as a day use pass:

- Multiple unit/family permits: \$105 per year. Multiple permits (6 or fewer) can be purchased by one individual for a family, or if an individual owns more than three ATVs/motorcycles.
- Single unit permit: \$35 per year

Proof of registration must be provided when the permits are purchased, and all vehicles must be registered to the same address.

- Day use permits will be available on site and can be purchased for \$5.

BUREAU PERSPECTIVE:

The BLM will continue to provide safe, motorized recreation opportunities while protecting natural and cultural resources.

CONTACT:

Lynn Anderson, Outdoor Recreation Planner, (406) 896-5248